

**Title of the Study :** Evaluation of GCE Advanced Level General English Programme  
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### **Objectives / Terms of Reference**

The objective of this research was the evaluation of the effectiveness of an on-going project the A/L General English text across the country. As such it included within its scope.

1. The 4 Major sectors identified in the project proposal as : Urban / Rural / North-Eastern and Plantation sectors of the country.
2. These sectors would be included when all the provinces are represented through the selected districts stated in the project proposal.(Vide table..A1)
3. Examination of texts.
4. Class-room observations.
5. Interviews of teachers, teacher educators, administrators and writers.
6. Analysis of examination results.

Therefore, the main purpose of the research would be served quite well by a cross-sectional survey which is “concerned with conditions at a given point of time: (Good, 1945)

The qualitative approach through multifaceted methods of data collecting eg. open-ended questions, classroom observations, interviews and analysis of texts would help the researchers to discover underlying themes from the evidence, invites deeper exploration and help to form a coherent, consistent and “real” picture of the situation. While giving some depth to the findings, the judgmental and subjective features could limit its objectivity and perhaps its reliability.

What is lost in generalizability and objectivity through the above approach would be gained from the quantitative approach.

### **Methodology**

#### **The Instruments**

The instruments varied to suit these two approaches as well as the objectives relating to a learning teaching situation.

The main instruments were

1. Questionnaire
2. Interviews
3. Classroom observation schedules
4. Examination results.
5. A study of the text book materials – an overview provided by the students, teachers, teacher educators and administrators of the samples and researchers.

#### **The Sample**

- i. The main sample of students  
The population universe as specified in the project proposal and comprising 1 AB and 1C schools was 2,494 at the time of the survey. Out of this 43 (originally 38) schools from 13 districts were selected as being representative of the schools of districts of all provinces of the country as well as of the 4 sectors specified in the proposal.
- ii. Teachers teaching A/L General English, selected from the areas specified above.

- iii. Teacher educators and administrators selected from the same areas.

## **Recommendations**

### **Teaching-learning Process**

1. The classroom climate should be made more positive with the teacher playing a less dominant role, so that students participate in the learning process.
2. More adult learning strategies such as group work, projects, seminars, debates and self-directed learning opportunities should be provided by reducing the emphasis on traditional seat-work and teacher presentations.
3. Teachers should abandon the idea of trying to teach the textbook from cover to cover, and word by word. They should make a judicious selection of items which are appropriate to their own contexts.
4. Greater use should be made of the cassettes for practicing listening, rather than for pronunciation only. Teacher prepared activities can be developed to substitute those given in the textbook to bring more variety to listening tasks.
5. The simpler tasks and activities in the textbook should be assigned to weaker students. If needed they could be simplified further. Able students should be assigned to help weaker students in Cooperative Learning Groups.
6. Teachers must convey to students the value of the GCE AL General English programme through better preparation and commitment to their own task as teachers.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

1. A limited amount of homework can be assigned to students. These along with class projects and tests can form part of SBA. Students should be encouraged to do well in this aspect of the programme even if they do not plan to sit for the final examination.
2. The marks of the General English paper should not be added into the aggregate mark for purposes of University Entrance. The present policy should continue.
3. Investigate the possibility of testing oral language skills at local level and assigning about 20 marks for this component at the Final Examination. RESC staff, ISAs and senior neighbourhood teachers could be used for this purpose.
4. As a large proportion of students do not sit the final paper in General English, investigate the possibility of having a regional examination of 2-3 hours duration for them, with a regional certificate. In order to encourage classroom learning a part of the grade for the regional certificate can come from SBA.
5. The above (2.1.10) can be treated as confidence building, stop-gap measures to be discontinued when infrastructure provision is addressed and more students participate in the final examination.

### **Teacher Competencies and Training**

1. All untrained AL General English teachers should be provided with adequate materials related training at regional level.
  - A training course of at least one week's duration should be designed at the NIE for this purpose. Input for the preparation of this course should be provided by the writers, teacher educators (from remote areas e.g. Ampara, Polonnaruwa), teachers and NIE personnel.
  - The course should include a pre-course assignment which participants need to complete before they come to the course. This will make them more familiar with the text and increase their awareness of text related issues.
  - The course should be trialled with a group of teacher educators. Videos could be made of some of the presentations. (e.g. those given by university staff) so that they can be made use of at regional training programmes.

- Teacher educators who participate in the course should first train the other teacher educators using the same course syllabus, and then organize regional courses.
  - The course should include component such as:
    - Individualizing instruction (using specific lesson units)
    - Adding variety and creativity to classroom teaching. (general, as well as related to specific unit tasks), etc.
2. School based training models can be used to train others, who feel they need further training.
    - Initially it will be necessary to provide trainer training in the implementation of SBT models.
  3. It is very important to raise the quality of ISAs and ADEs, through training in clinical supervision and teacher education techniques. Selection of ISAs should include a written test, interview and experience.
  4. Language instruction and remedial English should be provided for all AL teachers who need it. The District English Language Improvement Centres (DELICs) can be restarted to conduct these programmes. Classroom Language should be given as a component of such a course.
  5. The NIE English Department has a manpower problem. A special officer should be appointed to be in charge of the AL General English programme.
  6. Participation in any form of continuing education, including SBT should be recognized as credit towards the in-service requirements of the Teacher's Service Minute. Continuing teacher education should be linked with incentives, promotions and salary increases.

### **Infrastructure Provision**

1. The entire learning package should be made available to all students. All AL teachers should be supplied with the TGs. All schools should have at least one copy of the syllabus.
2. A handbook should be prepared for principals and other administrators explaining the importance of the programme and school policy regarding its implementation. This handbook should be in all three languages.
3. Teachers should be better deployed so that all schools have necessary teachers.
4. The problem of contract teachers should be dealt with. They should be confirmed in their positions only if they have the necessary qualifications and language competence; after which they should be trained to use AL materials.
5. English trained teachers should not be deployed to teach other subjects in English medium classes. They should also not be used to teach oral English at primary level as there is a dearth of English teachers at secondary level and AL.
6. Students should be made aware of the importance of English at AL, and be encouraged to sit the final examination.

### **The Materials**

#### *General*

1. Reduce the content overload so that the textbooks can be completed within the stipulated time.
2. The complexity and difficulty level of the texts should match the knowledge base and reading level of the students.
3. Address the problem of classroom heterogeneity through several strategies.
4. Reduce some of the unfamiliar cultural references and non-high frequency idiomatic uses of language. The language of the textbook should be accessible to students.